



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

**Wildlife
Services**

FY 2004

WILDLIFE SERVICES—NORTH DAKOTA

Contact Information:

For Assistance:

Phil Mastrangelo, North Dakota and South Dakota

Wildlife Services State Director

2110 Miriam Circle, Suite A

Bismarck, ND 58501-2502

Phone: (701) 250-4405 FAX: (701) 250-4408

Toll-Free Number: 1-866-4USDAWS 1-866-487-3297

E-mail: p.mastrangelo@aphis.usda.gov

For Research:

Dr. George Linz, Field Station Leader

2110 Miriam Circle, Suite B

Bismarck, ND 58501-2502

Phone: (701) 250-4467 FAX: (701) 250-4408

E-mail: george.m.linz@aphis.usda.gov

Web site: www.aphis.usda.gov/ws

USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in North Dakota

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on North Dakota Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists respond to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS works to protect property and reduce human health and safety risks at airports, schools, and along roadways. The program also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; guards many natural resources, such as timber, from wildlife depredation; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by North Dakota WS include; managing damage caused by coyote and beaver, managing blackbird damage to sunflowers, mitigating waterfowl damage to grain crops, sampling and monitoring for West Nile virus and chronic wasting disease, conducting wildlife hazard assessment at civilian and military airports, and managing wildlife damage in urban environments.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to



develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Agricultural Crops—Blackbirds are responsible for more than \$5 million in losses annually to sunflower and grain crops in the upper Great Plains. In 2004, WS identified 5,000 acres of cattail wetlands as blackbird roost habitat. These areas were treated with an aquatic herbicide to make them less attractive to the blackbirds while improving habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife. Assistance was provided to 52 landowners in 14 counties.

In response to increased occurrences of Canada goose damage to crops, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department continued a program which allowed landowners with chronic goose damage to legally remove geese and destroy nests under the authority of depredation permits. WS, working in cooperation with the North Dakota Game and Fish and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, responded to 104 occurrences of goose damage. Frightening devices, electric fencing, and information on habitat management we provided to landowners. Depredation permits were also issued to 76 landowners.

Protecting Livestock—In 2004, WS responded to 648 occurrences of predator conflicts with livestock. Agency personnel documented \$100,000 in livestock losses to predators with a control program in place. Scientific research shows that in the absence of a livestock protection program, the economic impacts resulting from coyote predation on livestock would have been 3-5 times higher.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Mitigating coyote predation on livestock
- Managing blackbird damage to sunflowers
- Protecting property and public health and safety from beaver damage
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Managing damage caused by Canada geese

Top 3 WS Research Projects of Interest to North Dakota:

- Managing blackbird damage to sunflowers
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Evaluation of early detection measures for West Nile virus

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—WS assisted civilian airports in Bismarck, Devils Lake, Dickinson, Fargo, Grand Forks, and Minot with a variety of potentially hazardous situations involving wildlife. Deer, ducks, geese, and gulls are the species which pose the greatest hazards.

Beaver Damage Management—WS responded to 531 incidents of beaver damage to trees, roadways, and crops which resulted in losses totaling \$740,000. Certified explosive specialists used binary explosives to remove 63 beaver dams in order to restore normal water flow in streams and creeks. Explosives are a cost-efficient means for removing beaver dams. Every \$1 spent on explosives saved property owners over \$6 on the cost of using heavy machinery to remove the dams.

Wildlife Disease Surveillance—In late 2003, a newly created Wildlife Disease Biologist position was incorporated into the North Dakota WS program as part of a national wildlife disease program within USDA-Wildlife Services. As a result of this new position, the North Dakota program's ability to assist cooperators with domestic animal and wildlife disease issues was strengthened. In 2004, assistance was provided to the North Dakota Department of Health with West Nile virus surveillance from June through September. A total of 625 serum and tissue samples were collected from birds in 13 counties. These samples were forwarded to North Dakota State University's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory for testing where numerous positives were identified from 12 of the 13 counties. In addition, assistance was also provided to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department with chronic wasting disease surveillance. Over 2,000 tissue samples have been collected from hunter harvested white-tailed deer, mule deer and elk.

Human Health and Safety—WS documented 144 occurrences of wildlife threats to human health. Over half of the concerns dealt with the threat of rabies transferring from wildlife to humans or domestic pests.

Urban Wildlife Conflicts—Human/wildlife conflicts in urban areas increase each year. These conflicts range from animals inside homes to damage to trees, lawns, and gardens. Wildlife typically responsible for these problems include beaver, geese, rabbits, raccoons, skunks, and squirrels. In 2004, WS documented damages totaling \$35,000 to urban businesses and homes.

Major Cooperators

- North Dakota Aeronautics Commission
- North Dakota Department of Agriculture
- North Dakota Farm Bureau
- North Dakota Game and Fish Department
- North Dakota Department of Health
- North Dakota Lamb and Wool Producers
- North Dakota Stockmen's Association
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- USDA Forest Service
- National Sunflower Association

Protecting Air Travelers—WS assisted civilian airports in Bismarck, Devils Lake, Dickinson, Fargo, Grand Forks, and Minot with a variety of potentially hazardous situations involving wildlife. Deer, ducks, geese, and gulls are the species which pose the greatest hazards.

Information Transfer—WS continued its extensive educational program to help residents of North Dakota with their specific wildlife conflicts. A total of 1,300 personal consultations and 22 instructional sessions were provided for 4,800 individuals. In addition, 1,900 informational leaflets were distributed to the public. Also, 750 pieces of equipment, such as live traps and propane cannons, were loaned free of charge so that individuals could solve their specific problems. WS provided instruction on the safe, effective, and humane use of all equipment which was loaned.

North Dakota Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and Local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

